

Immigration to the United States of America, 1865 - 1924

The Promise of the Land of Hope and Dreams...



Nearly 25 Million Immigrants

Between 1865 – the final year of the Civil War – and 1914 – the start of The Great War (World War I), some twenty-five million immigrants came to the United States – most of them from Europe.



“Old Immigrants” VS. “New Immigrants”

Old Immigrants:

- English-speakers from Northern or Western Europe.
- Protestant Christians.
- White.
- Familiar with English political traditions and law.

New Immigrants:

- Non-English speakers from Southern and Eastern Europe.
- Different Alphabets: Greek, Cyrillic, Arabic.
- Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims.
- Unfamiliar with English political traditions and law.

Push Factors – Forced Out of Europe

- Farmers impoverished.
- Few Job Opportunities.
- War & Mandatory Military Service.
- Tyranny: Kings, Tsars, Despots.
- Religious Persecution.
- The Irish Potato Famine, Pogroms, vestiges of the Feudal System.

Pull Factors – Drawn to America

- Free or cheap land.
- Abundant Job Opportunities.
- Higher Quality of Life.
- Democracy, individual rights, and religious freedom.
- Economic opportunity and Social mobility.

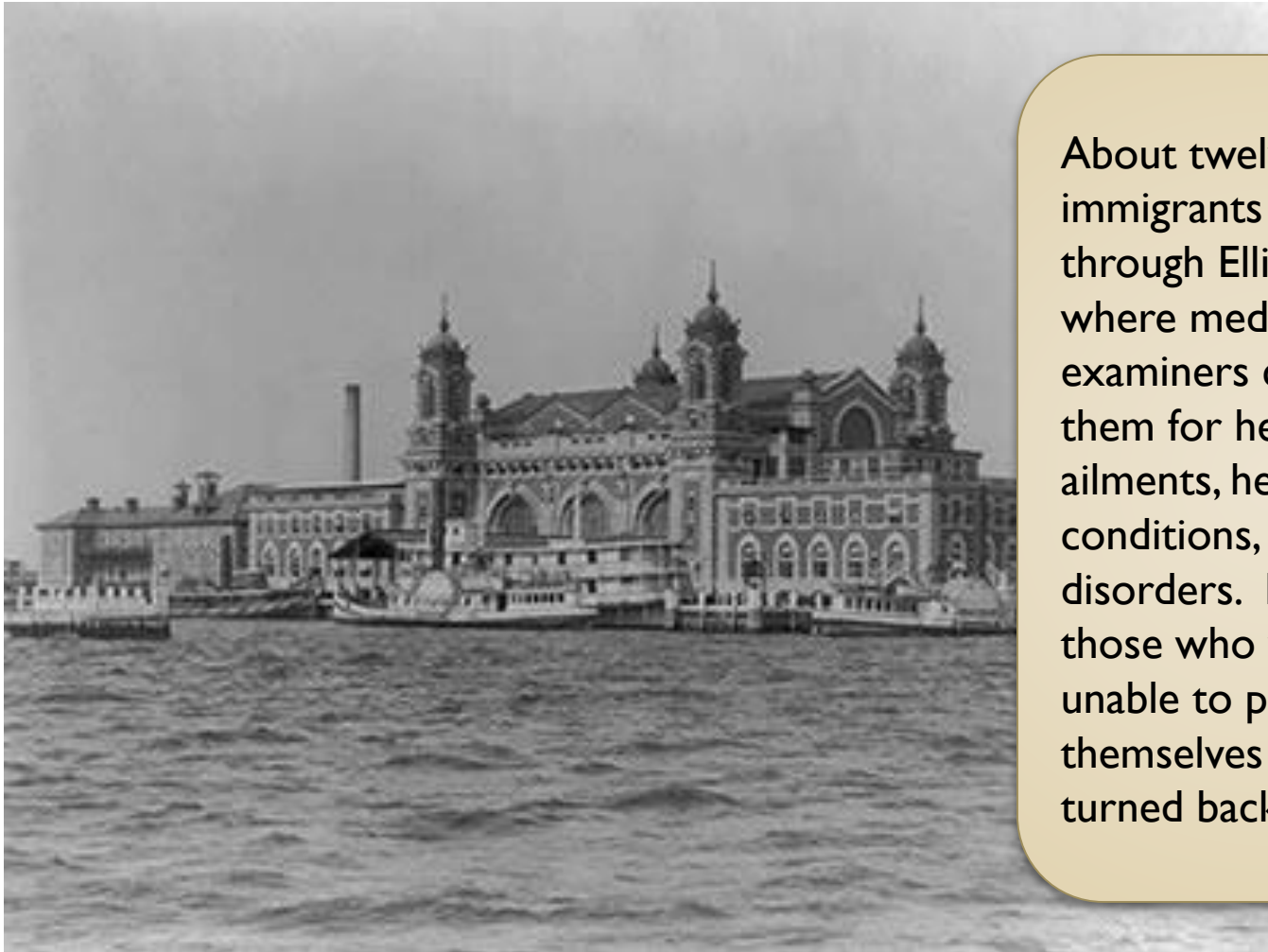
Emigration and Immigrants



Steerage Class

STEERAGE: The cheapest form of passage to America. Steerage class was below decks, no seats or beds provided. The poorest immigrants made their way to the United States this way. Illness below decks was common; death was a real possibility.

Ellis Island Immigration Station

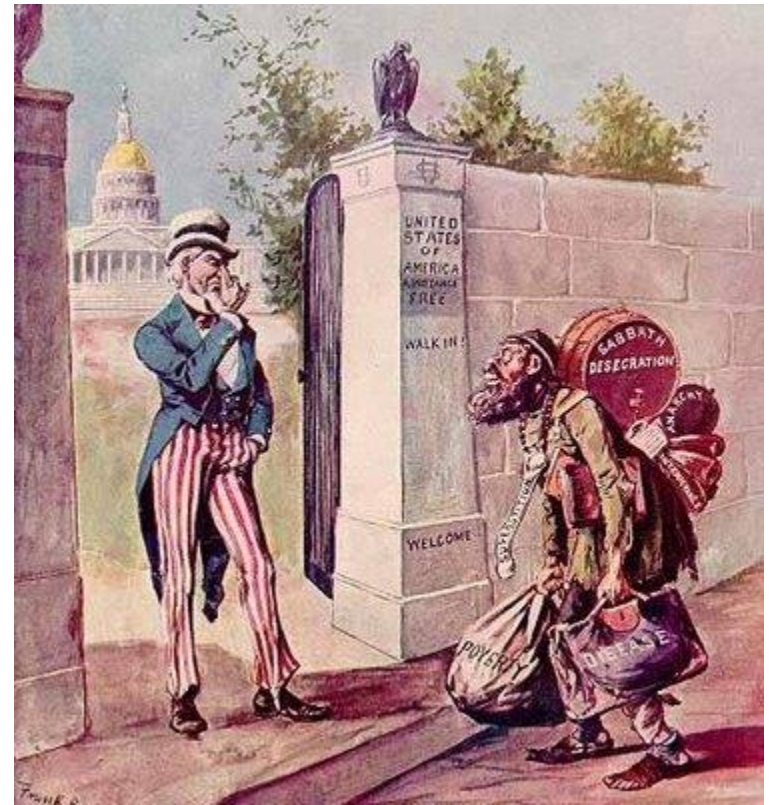


About twelve million immigrants passed through Ellis Island, where medical examiners checked them for heart ailments, hernias, scalp conditions, and mental disorders. Radicals and those who were unable to provide for themselves may be turned back as well.

Nativism: Anti-Immigrant Bigotry

Americans associated immigrants with many negative characteristics:

- Poverty
- Disease
- Superstitions
- Sabbath Desecration
- Anarchy & Radicalism
- Intemperance



Ethnic Cities

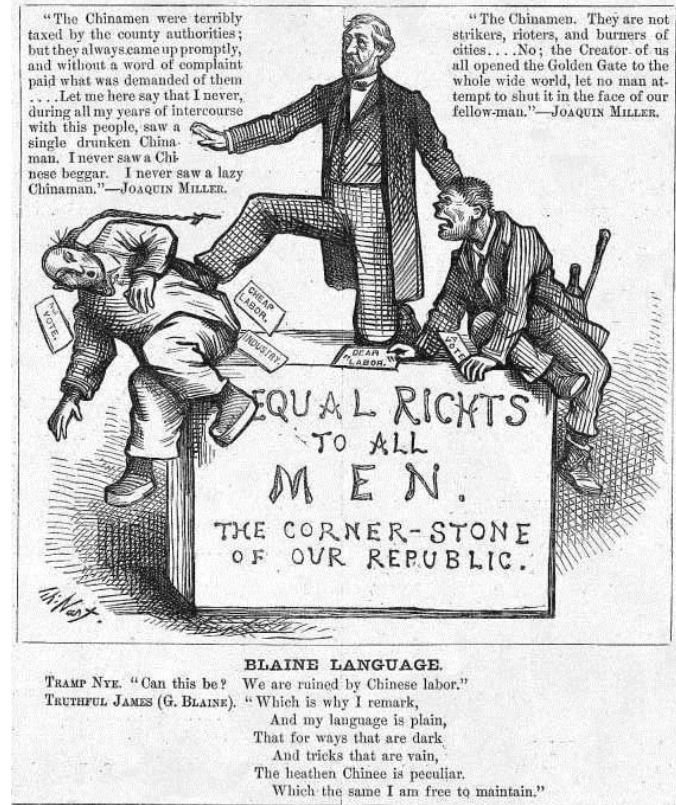
Particularly in major metropolitan areas, different national or ethnic groups tended to stay together in one region of the city, or neighborhood. For many immigrants, this provided them with a certain level of comfort. The people around them spoke a familiar language, worshipped as they did, ate the same foods, and carried on many of the same cultural traditions as they had practiced in their native lands.



Since they could easily get by without assimilation, some immigrants were slow to adopt the English language or to follow American cultural traditions.

Chinese and Japanese Immigration to California and points West...

- In China, widespread unemployment, poverty, and famine all encouraged immigration. Many Chinese workers came as contract laborers for the railroads; just as many though came to work as farmers or merchants.
- Japanese immigration increased due to changes in the island nation's economy. Since opening itself from isolationism in the mid-19th Century economic changes had caused turmoil. Many saw the United States as a land of opportunity.



Although opportunities did exist for Japanese and Chinese immigrants, they were also the targets of Nativist vigilantism and bigotry.

Angel Island Immigration Station

Angel Island was the immigration station in San Francisco Bay where most Chinese, Japanese, or other Asian immigrants entered the United States. Because the screening process for Asian immigrants was far stricter than that of European immigrants (law restricted immigration from China past 1882) many of these immigrants were held on the island in barracks for weeks or even months at a time.



Angel Island in San Francisco Bay.

Unique Reasons for Immigration

- Italian Americans: cholera epidemics, land shortages, famine, poverty, and unemployment cause Italians to emigrate. They took work in America as dockworkers, construction workers, or skilled laborers in urban areas.
- Eastern Europeans:(Poles, Russians, Hungarians) came to the United States due to land shortages and the fear of mandatory military conscription in their home countries. Religious persecution was also a common reason for embarking for America for Jews from this region. Many Eastern Europeans took work as coal miners, steel or textile workers, or in the garment industry.
- Chinese: Famine, land shortages, and civil unrest caused them to leave China. Many took jobs in railroad construction, mining, or as skilled laborers or merchants in the West.

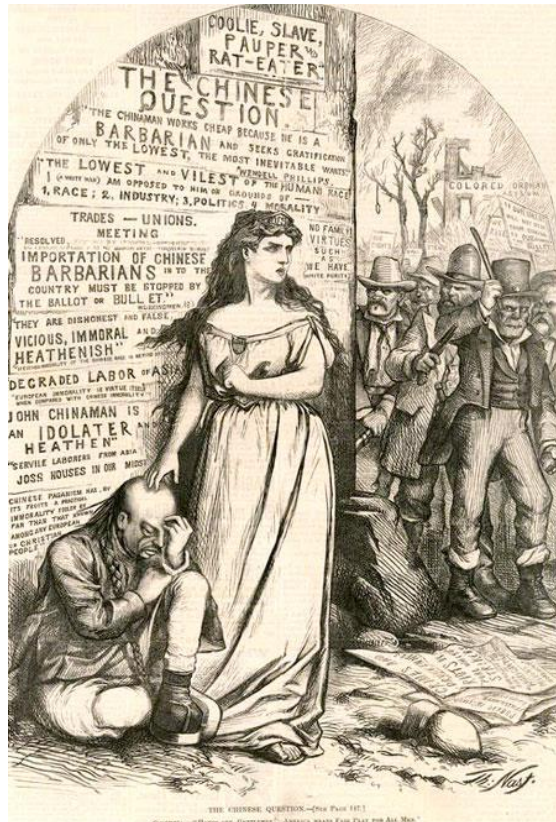
Nativism – bigotry towards immigrants and their families.



Anti-Catholic Nativism

- The American Protective Association was a nativist organization established to promote bigotry against Irish Catholic immigrants. Its member would not hire Irish immigrants or vote for Irish-American candidates for office.
- The “No Irish Need Apply” signs were prominently displayed in many businesses in American cities.
- Laws restricting the poor from coming to America in the 1880s to prevent Irish immigration.

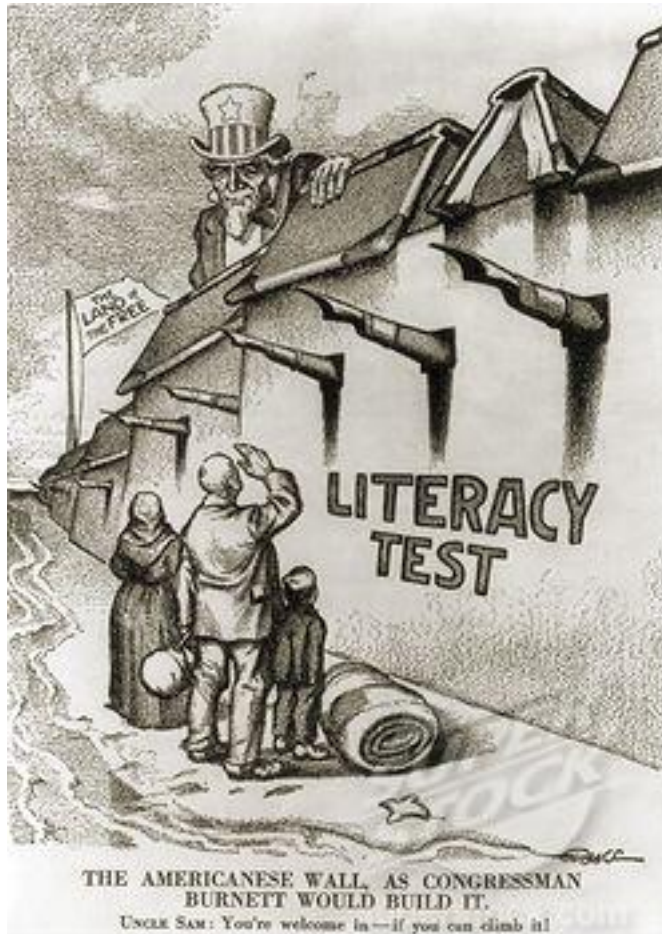
The Exclusion Act of 1882 banned immigration from China for Ten Years. It was twice re-enacted by Congress.



The Gentleman's Agreement

- This was not a law, but a diplomatic policy worked out between the American and Japanese governments in 1907. Theodore Roosevelt was the President of the United States. He insisted that immigration from Japan to the United States cease. To avoid conflict, the Japanese refused to allow any of their citizens to have passports to the USA.

The Immigration Act of 1917 & The Immigration Act of 1924



The Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924 placed restrictive barriers on immigration as well. Literacy requirements and economic tests prevented poor immigrants from coming to America. The true purpose of the law, though, was to restrict immigration from Eastern European nations.